

**Grand Valley Metro Council  
Executive Committee Meeting**

Wednesday, June 23, 2010  
2:30 pm

Grand Valley Metro Council  
678 Front Ave. NW, Suite 200  
Grand Rapids, MI

**MEETING NOTES**

**Present**

Jim Buck	City of Grandville
Daryl Delabbio	Kent County
Cindy Fox	Cascade Township
George Heartwell	City of Grand Rapids
Don Hilton, Sr.	Gaines Township
Cy Moore	Council Treasurer
Alan Vanderberg	Ottawa County
Rob VerHeulen	City of Walker

**Absent**

Rick Root	City of Kentwood
-----------	------------------

**Other**

Jeremy Bergwerff	Grand Valley Metro Council
Abed Itani	Grand Valley Metro Council
Gayle McCrath	Grand Valley Metro Council
Don Stypula	Grand Valley Metro Council

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 2:30 p.m. by Don Stypula.

**2. Membership Survey**

Don Stypula asked committee members for input on the survey and the memo written by Daryl Delabbio.

Discussion ensued regarding communications, previous use of PR firms, and newsletters. It was determined a newsletter would only be effective if it were issued more than quarterly (monthly?) and had content of value (not fluff). It should not be something which a lot of money is spent on.

Don Stypula showed the committee an electronic format used by JimTalon which he would like to run by the membership.

Daryl Delabbio stated that there probably is some value to a newsletter in this format, but it could become a monster in size (distribution). It would need to go out more than Quarterly. Daryl also stated that every action taken does not need to be approved by the Board. It gets into the minutia of management. This is the job of management.

Abed Itani reported a long time ago we had a monthly newsletter and we had a hard time coming up with articles.

Don Stypula said it could be electronic and include what has been done and what is coming down the line. Is this what you want?

Don Hilton stated it could be a very brief newswire type of communication.

Al Vanderberg remarked that he does one every Friday. Sometimes he misses one, but people really appreciate it.

Daryl Delabbio stated communications are ancillary to what we do and not the focus.

Don Stypula reviewed the results of the survey. The biggest complaint was there were not enough tangible results or value. Being relevant and regionally collaborative were persistent comments.

Jim Buck asked committee members to comment on their feelings regarding the Metro Council and /or Daryl Delabbio's letter.

Jim said when the City of Grandville joined the Metro Council the overriding reason was because of the strength of the combined legislative voice.

Rob VerHeulen said in reviewing the survey the thing that struck him was that most respondents say they don't get a lot of value out of Land Use. I have asked our planner how much we use Land Use and it is not very much.

Fundamentally, what is going on in the mind of the members? What I hear them saying is they are not getting value. I think regional collaboration is a good way of getting it. We need an expert in the area. Either take someone from staff and get them up to speed on it or get someone else. Now the MML is getting into it. Maybe someone on staff should reach out to MML to see how we get in on the beginning of it.

Jim Buck explained that the MML came to GVMC to get involved because they thought GVMC would be a good candidate to coordinate it in this area. They are excited about it. It must include the school districts and KISD, etc. It is almost a perfect fit with the interest of the members.

George Heartwell reported he had lunch and talked with Nyal Deems about the original purpose when the Metro Council was created. It was to create a forum where members could come together, communicate and exchange ideas. This is the only forum where we get to do that. It is impossible to measure the value. The work that GVMC did with Plainfield, Grand Rapids Township and the City of Grand Rapids on boarder planning was invaluable. It was facilitated by the Metro Council. We need to bring information to the table to be discussed in the forum. This is what gives it real value.

Jim Buck reported Former Grand Rapids Mayor John Logie said one of the things that has been forgotten is if it weren't for the opportunity GVMC provides to rub elbows with the leaders of other communities, The Rapid would never have happened. It took a lot of give and take that wouldn't have happened if those relationships and that trust weren't developed through the Metro Council.

Don Stypula asked if we could secure funding over time for those types of issues, we could take Land Use off of the shelf and reactivated. Am I heading in the right direction?

George Heartwell said UMM exists to fill a vacuum the Metro Council left to talk about collaborative issues. There is no reason it would need to exist if Metro Council had been doing its role. Metro Council needs to stay neutral and create the forum, not take sides.

Al Vanderberg said you need to show the tangible value of the Metro Council. We can't stand on our laurels and on past accomplishments. It is not a matter of is there value in getting together. We need to drill down to what activities and what skill set is needed. Every part of GVMC has to have a value added component to retain members. What is the compelling reason to keep an activity in the budget? We need to kick it up a notch to keep it relevant, measurable and accountable.

Daryl Delabbio discussed the memo he wrote to the Executive Committee. When he left the May meeting he was under the impression a survey was going to be done with three and only three questions and also a special Executive Committee subcommittee would be convened. The questions were: Why are you a member; what services other than Transportation do you use; and what services do you think it should provide. The survey shows wide disparity in what everyone thinks. I suggest this group or a smaller group distill the information in the survey to answer these three questions and create a plan. 35 people can't do it. This group has to provide leadership to the whole Board and Don needs to provide leadership to this Board.

Don Stypula asked what if he would quickly sit down with staff and outline a plan.

Daryl Delabbio reported in August we said we needed a clearing house of intergovernmental cooperation. UMM ended up putting this together. This should have been done and staffed

by the Metro Council. We should be looking at intergovernmental agreements from across the country and siphon out the best of them and report. Members are struggling with various issues such as social media policies, medical marijuana, wind turbines, urban chickens, etc.

George Heartwell asked Daryl if the County would consider staying if they had a good plan.

Daryl Delabbio indicated they are looking at various cuts and presently, he can't justify it.

Rob VerHeulen asked what if there was a plan. Are you just writing the organization off?

Daryl stated it would have to be more than just a plan, but it would also need to be implemented. He said he was not yet writing the organization off.

Cindy Fox said going through the survey, she felt there was too many questions. It was too challenging to complete. We should put together a new survey and get a plan together which would include acting as a clearinghouse for services, ideas and cooperative spirit. We as an organization need to evolve based on today's realities.

Don Hilton said when he got the survey he asked other administration / staff for input and didn't get much help. In looking at the results, the thing that jumps out at him is a concern about Land Use Planning and the Blueprint. Members found very little or no value in it. We do not need to micromanage, but need to know what the staff is doing. We don't want to look for work just to justify a department. There was a time I could easily have answered those three questions, now it is hard.

Cy Moore stated the Metro Council is in many ways similar to the United Nations. Members have many diverse interests and membership response will vary so much you will never get a concrete answer. We can't ask everyone to develop the plan. I agree with Daryl. For the good of the region, someone needs to make some decisions.

Rob VerHeulen said we should get a small group from the Executive Committee to but some meat on the bones. We need to Land Use and think quickly on how to evolve. The pain of all the members is going through needs to be considered. Unless we recognize that, we will see a flood of communities leaving. GVMC is not immune to the economic conditions. It will be the death of this organization if it just continues the same. We need to get three members from this group to convene to create a plan to convince ourselves and the Board of the value of GVMC.

Jim Buck said he was surprised by some of the criticism that was started when Lou Bender first became involved in Don's review. What was supposed to have been done was to some extent dependent on Lou's timetable. I thought the questions in the survey were fair, there were just too many. I hope we can satisfy Rob and Daryl.

Don Stypula indicated the survey showed three areas members wanted concentration in: cost sharing and collaboration; collaborative regional economic development and expanding GVMC's regional role.

Daryl Delabbio said we don't need to duplicate what the Right Place is doing which is regional economic development. What does expand GVMC's regional role mean?

It was indicated that services, issues forums on wind turbines, medical marijuana, urban chickens, etc.; and a clearing house for collaborative services could be included under expanding GVMC's regional role.

Al Vanderberg said he felt the survey was made unnecessarily complex for its value.

Don Hilton said we need to be cautious on how we phrase the next survey so members don't feel their previous answers were in vain or redundant.

Daryl Delabbio said he thought the survey was leading members to certain answers by stating there were four core functions. I don't know if any of them rank as developing collaborative relationships. Of our 44 Board members, only about 30 invest about one hour a month. The Executive committee knows what is going on more than anyone else and we should set the direction for them. We should glean out of this survey the answers to the three questions and Don, you need to set the direction for them.

Al Vanderberg said we don't want to micromanage. We want to provide direction. Don provides the action and we develop mechanisms for measurement for accountability.

Jim Buck recapped: A group including Cindy Fox, Al Vanderberg, Daryl Delabbio, Jim Buck, Milt Rohwer and Tom Butcher will convene perhaps two times before the next Executive committee meeting so they can distill information from the survey and create a plan.

The Executive committee meeting will be moved to the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

### **3. Adjournment – 4:30 p.m.**